

STORMS, J. A.
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INTERVIEW

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Billie Byrd,
Journalist,
May 3, 1938.

An Interview with
J. A. Storms, white, age 54, Okemah, Oklahoma.

M. L. Frericks, white, age 58, Okemah, Oklahoma.

PIONEER ACTIVITIES.

The pastimes of the pioneers settling this territory after moving into what is now Okfuskee county were as hardy as the frontier and the pioneers themselves.

If it wasn't "going for" some outlaw who had enraged the area, hunting wild deer, turkey or game over the country, or fishing -- it was log rolling.

To help build homes, settlers and their families for miles around would gather to cut logs, hew them into right sizes and build a log structure for some one who could not do all the work himself. A matter of necessity and the big-heartedness of the pioneers originated the "log rolling" parties. The women folks cooked while the men did the work on the house or barn, as it happened to be, usually a house.

One man was put on each corner to hew the notch and keep the corner straight. After the logs were cut and rolled to the site for the building, everything was ready and each

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man had a part to do. While the work was going and bobbles were made, wholesale advice, joking and consultations were kept up.

Not all men worked until the buildings were completed. After the logs were in place, most of the men went about their own work. Shingling and other details required much time after the logs were in place. But the log rolling was of another era, it was a pastime of the frontier. To build a modern home, the carpenter goes to a lumber yard and the required material is hauled out, ready to be cut easily into desired lengths and shapes for any building work.

This county has its "ghost towns" also. Burke City was a promising hamlet on the Canadian, east of where Oel Maloy lives. (Section 3, Township 11, Range 9). It was a thriving community of thirty-five houses, including a gin, and had a ferry for high water crossing. No building remains now to tell of the hustling city that once was. Slick City and Garrison City are no more. They moved with the oil.

The water question, in the newly starting town of Okemah, was solved by a tank wagon delivering the fluid at

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two and one-half cents per bucketful or twenty-five cents for a barrel, if you took that much. If a stray cow nosed the cover off the water barrel, the wife put off washing until another delivery could be made. Cows roamed at will over the country until after statehood, when they were voted out.

Peddling water has become a lost industry, as also has tie-hacking and the walnut log business. Dug Sharp, an old stockman and farmer living east of Okemah, Okfuskee County, had a barn which was walnut from mudsills to ridge-pole. Maybe it would be worth money if it had not burned.

This section of the country boasts of the largest pecan orchard in the world, yet thirty years ago pecan trees were considered a nuisance and were chopped down to make room for the corn and cotton.

In those days, we had some large cattle ranches, too. The Brown Wilson ranch, northeast of Okemah, still operates and back yonder, Luther Williams had about twenty-five sections under fence just north of town. The pasture extended from cemetery hill, north of town, almost to Morse, then Norburg.